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CLOSING SESSION EAST TIMOR CONFERENCE, LISBON 24 FEBR. 1996

One of the main features, probably the most important feature of the annual East Timor conferences organised by the Oporto University, actually by Prof. Antonio Barbedo de Magelhaes is the presence of Indonesian democrats. I have been a regular visitor and speaker since the Second Jornadas and therefore I have witnessed the changes in the participation of the Indonesians.

In the eighties, it was politically unthinkable to have Indonesians coming to Lisbon and speaking up loudly against the aggression of the Indonesian military in East Timor. In 1981 I was one of the two lonely Indonesian voices during the Permanent People's Tribunal on East Timor held also in this city. Because of my statement I was put on the blacklist and was not allowed back to my country. So much has changed since then.

The Oporto East Timor conferences has become a gateway for Indonesians to speak up on the truth of East Timor and demanding the right of self-determination. First only Indonesian refugees like me visited the conferences but in the following years Indonesian activists decided to take the risk and attended the conference, in the first instance still using an alias. In this last two years Indonesian participants have advanced even further and went into the open to denounce their own government.

The Oporto conferences has, at the same time, become the place where Indonesian intellectuals have found a place where they can exchange thoughts about the situation in East Timor with an international public but also exchange thoughts with the East Timorese community here in Portugal. The Indonesian participation at the Oporto conferences in fact reflect the objective situation in Indonesia, i.e. the growing pro-democracy movement in Indonesia.

The war in East Timor used to be a hidden war for many, many years, not only internationally but also for the Indonesian public. As we all know, this has changed tremendously in the nineties. Despite a lot of misreporting the Indonesian press is paying a lot of attention to the East Timor issue. Important East Timorese like Xanana Gusmao or Mgr Belo are house-hold names in Indonesia. In fact Jose Ramos Horta has also become a house-hold name in Indonesia. The Indonesian pro-democracy movement has put East Timor firmly on their agenda, as reflected today with the presence of two union leaders Mochtar Pakpahan and Wilson.

The timing of the conference this year was a bit unfortunate. When Prof. Barbedo Magelhaes started to invite the Indonesian participants this year, he didn't realise it coincided with Muslim New Year. Some of the persons invited this year are Muslim leaders and declined the invitation because of the time schedule. But it is true to say that the Indonesians invited this year to Portugal are much more to the centre of mainstream politics, again an reflection of the growing awareness in Indonesia of the East Timor tragedy.

Two solidarity groups with East Timor exist in Indonesia. SPRIM, represented here by Wilson and the East Foundation, another umbrella group based in Salatiga, Central Java. Their main task is to disseminate information and do actions which can increase the awareness among the Indonesian public. The link or bond between the struggle for

democracy in Indonesia and the struggle to determine their own political future in East Timor has become much more solid in this last year.

More people in Indonesia speak up against the atrocities in East Timor. Recently an Indonesian officer, Lt. Colonel Subianto, in an interview with Radio Nederland, revealed that he refused to be sent to East Timor. The officer argued why he he became a war resister. East Timor was already free, why should we occupy it. As a result his military career went sour. Family of deceased Indonesian soldiers also speak up and demand to the authorities what happened with their next of kin.

While I'm expressing a positive side of the developments, there is also a darker side. The situation in East Timor is very depressing. The Indonesian army is very determined to give a fatal blow to the clandestine front and the Falintil guerrillas. Young people are arrested, interrogated, tortured or in worst cases simply disappear never to return home. Military operations in the last weeks show increasing clashes with the guerrillas. This situation is also expressed in the fleeing of young Timorese from Dili and the surroundings to Indonesia. In the last month East Timorese seeking refuge in different embassies have come directly from East Timor, which reflects this depressing situation.

Another worrying development is what we call in Indonesia the *premanisasi* of political life. *Preman is* the Indonesian expression for gangsters. In this particular case political gangsters. Wilson is a living witness of this development. During the occupation of the Dutch embassy by Indonesian and East Timorese activists, counter demonstrations were organised by these premans. Very tough types, skillful in martial arts and very violent. The Dutch ambassador became one of the victims of the brutality of the premans violating international immunity by simply entering the embassy premisses.

Brig.General Prabowo, commander of the red berets commando troops and president Suharto's son-in-law recently went to East Timor to establish a special preman outfit called *Gardapaksi (Garda Muda Penegak Integrasi,* Young Guards for the Upholding of Integration). This para-military outfit is clearly meant to terrorise the young East Timorese. We only have to take the example of Haiti, a country ridden by political gangsterhood of Tonton Macoute for dozens of years started by Papa and Baby Doc. Increasing terror and violence in urban East Timor will only justify the presence of the Indonesian army, most likely the bottom line of Brig.General Prabowo.

With mutual efforts, we can also prevent East Timor going into that direction. International pressure towards Jakarta is essential, but also the growing understanding between the Indonesian youth and the Timorese youth. This mutual effort can isolate *Gardapaksi* and make it redundant.

Indonesia will experience two very shaky years up to the general elections in 1997. All the political institutions of Indonesia's New Order are malfunctioning. Opposition forces are emerging everywhere. I believe structural change is closeby. At the same time changes will not fall from the sky. The Indonesian pro-democracy movement, the East Timorese, the international community, all have to increase their efforts to make sure the changes in Indonesia will also secure the fundamental rights of the East Timorese.
Thank you.

Liem Soei Liong